Umatilla sees health care shifts, some new clinics

By JADE MCDOWELL STAFF WRITER

Umatilla, a town of 7,132, is headed toward a future of three medical clinics.

Family Health Associates of Hermiston will open a new clinic in Umatilla on Nov. 15 at the building that formerly housed Encore Wellness 4 Life. Jennifer Armstrong, the nurse practitioner in charge of Encore, plans to open a new wellness clinic at a different location in Umatilla. And Columbia River Health, which recently announced a new partnership with Carlson's Umatilla Drug, has purchased property to place a clinic of their own in Umatilla.

It's a lot of changes, but should result in better access to health care for Umatilla residents. It could also have spillover benefits for Hermiston residents, said Umatilla Hospital District board member Danice McBee, as Umatilla residents currently seeking care at the Hermiston Family Health Associates location switch to receiving care in Umatilla.

'They've kind of outgrown their space at the hospital (in Hermiston)," McBee said.

The Umatilla Hospital District notified Armstrong in May that they would not be renewing her contract to provide clinic services at the district-owned building at 1890 Seventh St.

Now they have announced that Family Health Associates, which is led by Dr. Derek Earl, will open a clinic in the building on Nov. 15.

McBee said the hospital district board is very happy to see FHA open a Umatilla branch.

"I think it's going to be great," she

Although Armstrong will no longer contract with the hospital district, Umatilla is not losing her as a provider. She and her husband, Mark Keith, purchased a large house at 82346 Bucks Lane (just off Highway 730 before Interstate 82) and have remodeled it



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Cathy Putnam, behind the cash register, helps customers with their prescriptions Thursday at Columbia River Pharmacy in Umatilla.

into Encore Wellness 4 Life Umatilla, a private wellness center that will officially start seeing patients Nov. 1.

Keith said patients can expect to see the same team as the old site, with the addition of provider Jan Atigbi. They will include more traditional medical care in addition to "natural and holistic care" such as supplements.

Armstrong said she doesn't see FHA as competition. Right now she refers patients to Earl and he refers patients to her, she said, and she plans to continue their collaboration.

"It's not at all 'us against them," she said. "We're all working together to provide care for the community."

Columbia River Health CEO Seth Whitmer said CRH has already purchased property for a planned clinic to be built sometime in the next few

CRH has also acquired the former Carlson's Umatilla Drug. Cathy Putnam, who has owned the pharmacy and drug store since 1985, is joining the Columbia River Health family and will continue running the pharmacy.

They will have an open house Nov. 8 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with free flu shots from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

GSCHS meeting offers updates as well as health information

By JADE MCDOWELL STAFF WRITER

It was a year of growth and change for Good Shepherd Health Care System, according to CEO Dennis Burke.

Burke shared the hospital's progress over the 2017-18 fiscal year at a community meeting Oct. 24 that included a health fair and a talk by health expert Joe Piscatella.

Good Shepherd now has more than 700 employees and 50 volunteers, with an annual payroll of more than \$43 million. The hospital has seen a significant increase in patient satisfaction scores. And while about one-third of Oregon's hospitals are operating in the red right now, Burke said, GSHCS is doing well financially.

"We're in a very sound fiscal state," he said. "I think we have a lot of staying power."

Over the past year, GSHCS opened a 33,000-square-foot wing that includes a new women's center — a total investment of about \$12 million. It also opened a new urology suite, added chiropractic medicine, remodeled the home medical equipment store, purchased new state-of-the-art equipment and acquired Gifford Medical's urgent care and private practice clinic.

the programs side, On GSHCS launched a personal home care service, a home respiratory care service and expanded offerings in areas, such as speech therapy and diabetes management. Burke said in the past year the education department had a total of 3,192 educational classes or events, reaching more than 16,000

"I'm not aware of any hos-— our size, certainly, but any hospital — that does more in terms of educational events than we do," he said.

Burke also shared successes in receiving new awards and certifications, and reaching new standards of patient care. For example, Good Shepherd Medical Group scored a 97.2 out of 100 under a Medicare/ Medicaid incentive program that will reward the clinics with additional reimbursement funds for their quality care, improvement, efficiency and engagement.

Good Shepherd did have some setbacks in the last year. A construction-related fire in April caused "several million dollars" worth of damage to the hospital and equipment stored above the fire. Burke also noted an increase in emergency room visits from 19,818 to 20,890.

'That's something we try to keep down," he said.

Looking toward the future, Burke said GSHCS was just 10 days away from the launch of its new patient records program, Epic. As part of that launch, patients will have access to a 'superb" online patient portal that will give them 24/7 access to medical records and lab results, the ability to schedule their own appointments and to request prescription refills online.

Good Shepherd is also working on creation of a comprehensive pain-management program that will provide alternatives to opioids. Interwoven with that effort is the hospital's goal of creating an "industrial medicine" program targeted

specifically to the needs of area employees in manufacturing and shipping who experience chronic pain or are at risk of job-related injuries.

Burke said GSHCS plans to keep Gifford's urgent care clinic open seven days a week soon and will continue pushing awareness of its virtual care clinic as another alternative to ER visits on weekends. In addition, they plan to start their own family practice clinic and recruit more physicians and other providers to the area.

'We're probably about 15 physicians short of what we need in the community," he

To help with that, Good Shepherd is partnering with St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton and Kadlec Regional Medical Center in the Tri-Cities to create a rural residency program for doctors in training.

Before the update on GSHCS program, attendees were given time to browse a health fair. Booths ranged from free flu shots and screenings to information on first aid, reporting sexual assault and hospice.

Dawn Germain and Lianna Correa joked that their booth was too scary for most of the

"They see the word 'lactation' and they run away," Cor-

The booth drew a number of interested women, however, who learned more about the hospital's lactation assistance services. Germain said they visit new mothers on the maternity ward and also work with pediatricians to find women who need assistance with breast-feeding.



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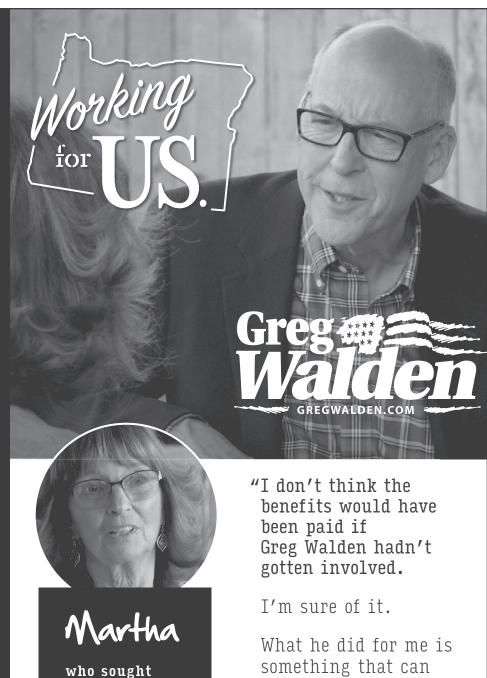
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The Bulletin

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